

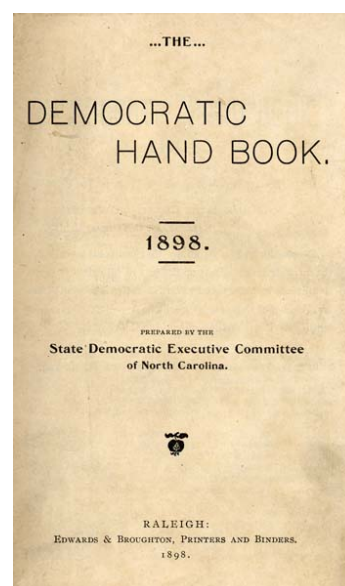
Development of the Democratic “Machine”

Furnifold Simmons led the development of the Democratic Party into a tough, well-organized competitor for political offices beginning with the 1898 campaign. Nominated to serve as chair of the state Democratic Party in 1898, Simmons had long been involved in state and national politics. A New Bern attorney, he had served as chair of the Democratic Party during the successful 1892 campaign but resigned before the 1894 season and subsequent Democratic defeats in 1894 and 1896.⁹

Simmons used his organizational skills to rally supporters and press others into the Democratic fold. The approach, credited to Simmons as chair of the party, was to use newspapers, speakers rallies, and coercion to achieve victory. In the *Democratic Party Handbook* for the 1898 campaign and other literature generated by Simmons, he promoted a singular topic—incumbent bad government by the Republican Party—and developed themes pertinent to that topic, many related to white man’s rule. He depicted whites who voted for Russell and Fusion as men who had been led astray and simply needed to be brought back to the Democratic ranks.¹⁰

The Republican Party was characterized as the party of scandal and

poor results, leading to debt, ineffectual government, and abuses by officials. Further, the handbook asserted that the Republican Party was dominated by blacks, who forced white Republicans to accede to black wishes in order to advance to political office. The end result of this black/white relationship, according to Democrats, was



Democratic Handbook, 1898
Image:
*Documenting the American South,
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

that unscrupulous and incompetent men of both races were allowed to rule state and local governments during Russell’s administration.¹¹

Further developing the argument, the handbook claimed that blacks outnumbered whites in several eastern counties even though the state featured a white majority overall. Their conclusion—“It is, therefore, manifest that the negro must enter as a factor into any plan, scheme or purpose for the administration of the public affairs of the State.”¹² The party stated that “this is a white man’s country and white men must control and govern it” because they could manage government better than African Americans, who had demonstrated through

Democratic Party Handbook, 1898 (Raleigh, N.C.: Edwards & Broughton, 1898).

⁹James Fred Rippey, *F.M. Simmons: Statesman of the New South, Memoirs and Addresses* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1936), 21.

¹⁰ The State Democratic Party Committee was comprised of Simmons as the Chair, John W. Thompson as Secretary, Francis Winston, and Heriot Clarkson. P. M. Pearsall was the head of the committee’s public speaking department. Pearsall made 410 speaking appointments, with most for Charles B. Aycock. Pearsall was a close associate of Simmons, and wrote 50 to 150 letters a day on his behalf. Poland, *Glorious Victory*, 23.

¹¹ *Democratic Handbook*, 35.

¹² *Democratic Handbook*, 37.